

Congress for payment. Section 7622 provides that the Secretary may delegate his settlement authority in matters where the amount to be paid is not over \$100,000. Under the Secretary's delegation, settlements not exceeding \$100,000 may be effected by the Judge Advocate General, Deputy Judge Advocate General, Assistant Judge Advocate General (General Law), and the Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate General (Admiralty). Authority has also been delegated to Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, and to Commander Sixth Fleet, to pay admiralty claims against the Navy not exceeding \$10,000, and to Commander Fleet Air, Caribbean, for damage to fishing equipment arising in Culebra-Vieques waters, not to exceed \$3,000.

(b) *Settlement is final.* The legislation specifically authorizes the Secretary to settle, compromise, and pay claims. The settlement, upon acceptance of payment by the claimant, is final and conclusive for all purposes.

(c) *Settlement procedures.* Where the amount paid is over \$100,000, after agreement is reached with counsel or claimants, the procedure is to prepare a settlement recommendation for the approval of the Secretary of the Navy. When settlement has been approved, the voucher required for effecting payment is prepared. The settlement check is then exchanged, in keeping with the commercial practice, for an executed release. In some situations, where the exchange of documents is impracticable, a claimant is requested to forward the executed release by mail, on the understanding that the release does not become effective until the check is received in payment. Claims settled under 10 U.S.C. 7622 are paid out of annual Department of Defense appropriations.

(d) *Limitation period.* The Secretary's settlement authorization is subject to a two-year limitation. This limitation is not extended by the filing of claim nor by negotiations or correspondence. A settlement agreement must be reached before the end of the two-year period. If settlement is not accomplished, then the claimant must file suit under the appropriate statute to avoid the limitation bar. The agreement reached in negotiations must re-

ceive the approval of the Secretary of the Navy or his designee, depending on the amount involved, prior to the expiration of the two-year period.

(e) *Matters in litigation.* When suit is filed, the matter comes within the cognizance of the Department of Justice, and the Secretary of the Navy is no longer able to entertain a claim or to make administrative settlement.

[39 FR 9962, Mar. 15, 1974, as amended at 55 FR 12173, Apr. 2, 1990]

§ 752.4 Affirmative claims.

(a) *Settlement authority.* The Navy has the same authority to settle affirmative admiralty claims as it does claims against the Navy. The statute conferring this authorization is codified in 10 U.S.C. 7623 (1982), and is the reciprocal of 10 U.S.C. 7622 (1982) referred to in § 752.3.

(b) *Scope.* 10 U.S.C. 7623 is a tort claims-settlement statute. It is not limited to affirmative claims arising out of collision, but embraces all instances of damage caused by a vessel or floating object to property of the United States under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Navy. Perhaps the most frequent instance is where a privately owned vessel damages a Navy pier or shore structure. To eliminate any issue of whether the damaging instrumentality was a vessel, the words "or floating object" were included.

(c) *Statute of limitation.* The United States is subject to a three-year statute of limitation when it asserts an affirmative claim for money damages grounded in tort. This limitation is subject to the usual exclusions, such as inability to prosecute due to war, unavailability of the "res" or defendant, and certain exemptions from legal process (28 U.S.C. 2415, 2416 (1982)).

(d) *Litigation.* 10 U.S.C. 7623 does not apply to any claim where suit is filed. If the Admiralty Division is unable to effect settlement, the matter is referred to the Department of Justice for the filing of a complaint against the offending party. Thereafter, as in the case of adverse litigated claims, the Navy has no further authority to effect settlement.

[39 FR 9962, Mar. 15, 1974, as amended at 55 FR 12174, Apr. 2, 1990]